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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7939
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1367
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4889
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8455
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6017
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3910
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1872
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000580

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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SUBJECT: BURMA: ASSK SPENDS ANOTHER MARTYRS DAY IN
DETENTION

REF: RANGOON 578

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Classified By: Pol Officer Sean O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) Summary: The regime and NLD each held ceremonies commemorating Martyrs Day on July 19, but both were considerably more low-key than in the past. While there were no disturbances at the NLD event itself, authorities arrested at least six NLD members over the weekend. We have seen no signs that the regime will follow through on the Foreign Minister's hint to ASEAN that Aung San Suu Kyi might be released in six months time.

MARTYRS DAY

12. (SBU) Both the regime and NLD held ceremonies to commemorate Martyrs Day on July 19, but both events were considerably more subdued than in previous years. Charge attended the NLD event along with the French, Italian, and Australian Ambassadors and British and German DCMs. Charge noted that this year's event was not as well attended as in the past and that at least two of the NLD's "uncles," Aung Shwe and U Lwin, were absent. While there was a significant security presence around NLD headquarters for the event, officials did not interfere with the ceremony or arrest anyone on the scene. The streets on either side of NLD headquarters were blocked, but police allowed diplomatic cars through. NLD officials released a Martyr's Day statement calling on the regime to allow all political parties - including ethnic groups - to operate freely and demanding the release of all political prisoners, including several prominent ethnic leaders. No demonstrations outside occurred either before or after NLD's ceremony.

13. (SBU) The regime commemorated the occasion with a small wreath laying in Rangoon. Unlike past years, the event was presided over by the Mayor of Rangoon Brigadier General Aung Thein Lin, rather than a member of the cabinet or SPDC.

Several family members of the deceased also attended, including a representative of Aung San Suu Kyi's brother. As usual, she was not permitted to pay her respects to her father. As reported in reftel, the diplomatic corps was also not invited. Official media coverage of the ceremony was scant.

ARRESTS

¶4. (C) While there were no arrests at the NLD's ceremony, authorities detained at least six NLD members on July 19 and ¶20. An NLD official told us that officials detained NLD youth members Ko Myint Htay, Ko Thai Han, Ko Win Myint Maung, That That Oh Wai, Sa Yar Aung Pe, and Ko Kaw Zay Ya. Although the regime has not acknowledged these arrests, several of our contacts speculated the arrests were an attempt by the authorities to prevent any unsanctioned commemorations of Martyr's Day by young pro-democracy activists. Charge noted significantly fewer young people than normal at the NLD ceremony.

FM'S STATEMENT ON ASSK

¶5. (C) The media reported Foreign Minister Nyan Win hinted to his ASEAN counterparts that Aung San Suu Kyi might be released in six months time, but made no promises or commitments to do so. According to Singaporean FM Yeo, Burmese FM Nyan Win explained that, under Burmese law, a political prisoner like Aung San Suu Kyi could not be held without charge for more than six years and noted she would reach the six year mark in about half a year. However, NLD spokesman and lawyer U Nyan Win (no relation to the FM)

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believed that Burmese law actually prohibited holding someone without charge for more than five years, and noted that ASSK and several other prisoners have already passed the five-year mark. Other than FM Nyan Win's comments, the regime has not discussed Aung San Suu Kyi's status since renewing her house arrest on May 27.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) While we always hold out hope that Aung San Suu Kyi may be released soon, nothing the Than Shwe regime has done to date indicates this will happen. While the Burmese Foreign Minister suggested that the detained NLD leader could be released soon, authorities tightened security around her home on the anniversary of her father's assassination. While officials promised to allow the NLD to hold its own Martyr's Day event, they arrested six of its members as a precaution. And instead of conspicuously honoring Aung San Suu Kyi's father as a national hero, the regime downgraded its own Martyr's Day commemoration and limited the media coverage of it. Perhaps the Foreign Minister's comments will prove prophetic, but we doubt it.

VILLAROSA